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## WAGES IN MUNICIPAL EMPLOYMENT.

IN Great Britain the adoption of direct employment of laborers by public bodies has proceeded further than in America. Two motives have inspired this policy.\* The one originated with the working classes, and appears especially in the London County Council and the parishes of Battersea and West Ham, where the labor element has considerable influence in government. This is the so-called "fair wages movement." The other originated with the business classes, and appears in those conservative cities where laborers have not as yet acquired a political standing corresponding to that which they have attained in America. This is the greater economy, the better quality of work, and the firmer control over contractors which the municipality can secure where it is in a position to do directly a portion of its own work.

In American cities a quite different development has occurred. The motive here has been neither "fair wages" nor "centralization of business," but *politics*. For more than a generation the business men and property owners have been kept out of city administration. Formerly they controlled the cities as they control now the smaller towns and villages. But the extension of suffrage in the generation preceding the Civil War had for its first effect in cities the exclusion of the successful business man and the substitution of the professional politician. Under such auspices the city government has been deprived of business ability; and those business men who might have carried their successful private methods into municipal administration, as in England and Germany, have, on the contrary, striven to tie the hands of the politicians by limiting the city's power to engage in business. Through State legislatures they have succeeded in prohibiting direct employment and in requiring that public work be let to contractors. The Massachusetts Board to investigate the Subject of the Unemployed presented in 1895 an extensive list of

\* See *Fabian Tract*, No. 84.

cities from which reports were received relative to the practice of doing public work by contract. In a majority of cases there is a legal obligation to employ the contract system, imposed by a general State law governing all cities or by special laws pertaining to the city charter. In Massachusetts, where the largest extension of city work has taken place, there is no State law.

While the influence of the business men, outside the city government, has been directed towards tying up the city, the influence of laborers has been directed towards raising the rates of wages. But there has been no principle at stake. There has been no "fair wages" movement based on any ethical or righteous view of the duty of the city to those who execute the city's work. Neither has there been any concerted movement of the working classes as a class. The granting of high wages on public work has been solely the voluntary bid of the politician for the labor vote. This is conspicuous in two facts: first, while wages were raised far above the market rate in all cases of direct employment, yet the amount of direct employment was, as already stated, reduced to the lowest limits by the legal obligation to adopt the contract system; second, while city wages were thus raised, there was no requirement in the contracts, as there is in nearly all English towns, that the contractors should pay the standard wages set by the municipality for its own employees. The fine hand of the politician is seen throughout. The bait of high wages is held before the laborer, but he takes the hook of the contractor. The politician wins on both sides,—as the "friend of labor" and as the silent partner of the contractor. It appears from the reports made to the Massachusetts Board that there were but two cities,—Buffalo and Philadelphia,—of all those reporting, in which the contractors were compelled to pay a standard wage. The ordinance in Buffalo was, in 1895, exceptional. Even there the stipulation was not entered in the contracts, where it could be enforced by the city engineer, but was left to the police to be enforced as a city ordinance. Its enforcement was therefore taken out of the hands of the only authority which attends closely to the execution of all items in the contract, and was placed in the hands of a department which is occupied with other duties.

Excepting Buffalo, there seemed to be at that time neither ordinance nor stipulation in the contracts governing the hours and wages of men employed by contractors. Much the larger number of cities reporting had city ordinances fixing the rate for employees of the city itself.

All the cities which reported to the Massachusetts Board on both city wages and contractors' wages showed that, with five exceptions, city wages were higher than contract wages. Where cities like Boston paid \$2 per day of nine hours, contractors paid \$1.25 and \$1.30 for ten hours. The city rate in this case was  $22\frac{2}{3}$  cents per hour, while the contractors' rates were  $12\frac{1}{2}$  and 13 cents per hour. The city rate was consequently 70 to 77 per cent. higher than the contract rate. In Indianapolis the city paid \$1.40 for eight hours, or  $17\frac{1}{2}$  cents per hour; contractors paid \$1.25 to \$1.75 for ten hours, or  $12\frac{1}{2}$  to  $17\frac{1}{2}$  cents per hour. Only in a few cities like Buffalo and Philadelphia, where city ordinances require contractors to pay the same rate as does the city, are wages the same. It is believed, however, says the report, that "contract wages reported are only approximately correct, and in all probability exceed the wages paid," seeing that the contractors are "not obliged to disclose the rate of wages paid, and, if these wages are very low, it is natural that there should be a disinclination on the part of contractors to answer inquiries on the subject. In some cases of public contract work it is claimed that wages ostensibly paid the laborers are not finally paid in full" (p. 35).

These figures show a striking disparity between contract wages and city wages. The city pays for unskilled labor 20 to 70 per cent. higher wages per hour than that paid by contractors on the same class of work. For skilled labor the disparity is not apparently so great. The city pays the full union rate without question. But, if it were always known exactly what contractors pay, it would often be found, especially where unions are weak, that the contractors are not paying the equivalent of the nominal rate. In times of business depression the unions are sometimes compelled to lower even their nominal rate for the benefit of contractors. In 1896 the Bricklayers' Union of Baltimore reduced its scale of wages from \$4 for eight hours to \$3.60 for eight hours, and then

again to \$3 for nine hours, with eight hours on Saturday, this being the rate generally paid non-union bricklayers. The carpenters of Baltimore and the painters of New York had a similar struggle. Notwithstanding the State law and the indictments under it, the painters of New York could not maintain their scale on public works.\*

In public employment, as far as hours and wages are concerned, common labor gains relatively more than organized labor. In the construction of a sewer in Denver in the winter of 1893-94, by direct employment, the hours of labor were uniformly eight for both skilled and unskilled laborers, while under contractors it had been eight for skilled and ten for unskilled. The wages, too, of the unskilled laborers, on the basis of time, were 30 per cent. higher than the current wages, and from 5 to 30 per cent. higher than those paid by contractors on the same work before the depression set in. Whereas contractors paid for common labor \$1.75 per day of ten hours, the city paid for the greater part of such work \$1.75 a day for eight hours; and about one-sixth of this labor was paid \$2 a day of eight hours.

On the other hand, skilled labor was not paid as high as it had been by private contractors. Foremen whom the city paid \$3.33 for eight hours had received \$10 for eight hours from contractors three years before. Stone masons who received \$4 had received \$7. The effect of municipal employment is here seen in more nearly equalizing the earnings of all laborers by raising the minimum and depressing the maximum. At the same time the city actually paid two and a half times as much for skilled as for unskilled labor.

The most complete investigation hitherto made of the relative wages in public and private employment is that of Mr. Ethelbert Stewart, under the direction of the Department of Labor.† In his comparison of the rates of wages paid in the four cities, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Springfield (Massachusetts), Mr. Stewart concludes that "the public, when employing directly by the day, pays the highest prevailing rate of wages for the shortest prevailing day's work"

\* *Bulletin of the Department of Labor*, No. 7, p. 727.

† *Bulletin of the Department of Labor*, No. 7, November, 1896.

(p. 23). Mr. Stewart gives in alphabetical order the rates of wages for different occupations on public work, when employed by the city directly and when employed by contractors, also the wages paid by contractors on private work. I have separated the occupations given by him, and have classified them under three headings,—namely, foremen, skilled laborers, unskilled laborers,—and have computed for each class the average per centum of excess in public wages over private wages. Table I. gives the aggregate result for the four cities named. It appears that for all classes public wages are higher than private wages, but that the difference is considerably greater in the case of unskilled labor than in that of skilled occupations. In the case of foremen the differences are not uniformly in the same direction. New York and Boston apparently treat their foremen relatively better than their skilled laborers, and, in the case of private work, better than unskilled labor. But Baltimore and Philadelphia pay their foremen relatively a smaller increase over the payments of private contractors than the increase for either skilled or unskilled labor.

TABLE I.

PUBLIC WAGES COMPARED WITH PRIVATE WAGES PER HOUR, 1897.

	BALTIMORE.		NEW YORK.		BOSTON.		PHILADELPHIA.	
	Per cent. higher than contractor on public work.	Per cent. higher than contractor on private work.	Per cent. higher than contractor on public work.	Per cent. higher than contractor on private work.	Per cent. higher than contractor on public work.	Per cent. higher than contractor on private work.	Per cent. higher than contractor on public work.	Per cent. higher than contractor on private work.
Foremen . . .	6.76	30.0	41.3	56.9	17.3	33.6	11.7	10.3
Skilled labor . .	19.8	22.0	31.7	38.3	11.6	19.1	19.6	22.3
Unskilled labor .	35.9	49.3	49.8	49.9	22.0	22.1	20.7	23.3

If we compare the foregoing summary regarding American cities with a corresponding study of British cities, we shall find a remarkable difference. The following table (Table II.)

TABLE II.

THE MEANS OF WEEKLY WAGES PAID BY PRIVATE EMPLOYERS AND MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS IN GREAT BRITAIN IN THE BUILDING TRADES AND POLICE SERVICE, 1891.\*

	Popu- lation 1897.	Class of Labor.	Weekly Wage.	
			Private.	Municipal.
Oldham .	143,442	Carpenters, masons, and bricklayers . . . . .	<i>s.</i> <i>d.</i> 36 4 (\$8.72)	<i>s.</i> <i>d.</i> 36 4 (\$8.72)
Preston .	113,864	Carpenters and plumb- ers . . . . .	33 6 (\$8.04)	26 10 (\$6.44)
Bolton . .	120,380	Carpenters, masons, bricklayers, painters .	32 2 (\$7.72)	32 0 (\$7.68)
Nottingham,	229,775	Policemen . . . . .	— —	27 8 (\$6.98)
		Carpenters, bricklayers, plumbers, painters, and bricklayers' laborers .	30 0 (\$7.20)	33 0 (\$7.92)
		Policemen . . . . .	— —	32 4 (\$7.76)
Bradford .	228,809	Carpenters, masons, and bricklayers . . . . .	31 4 (\$7.52)	31 2 (\$7.48)
		Policemen . . . . .	— —	32 4 (\$7.76)
		Totals for building trades, — five towns . . . . .	32 10 (\$7.88)	31 10 (\$7.64)
		Total for policemen in 12 large towns . . . . .	— —	27 11½ (\$6.715)

shows plainly that the wages paid to municipal employees in those cities for which separate returns were made to the Royal Commission on Labor were actually less on the average, as late as 1891, by one shilling per week than the wages paid by private employers. In Preston the wages were 6*s.* 8*d.* (\$2.60) less, but in Nottingham they were 3*s.* (\$0.72) higher. The table also shows that policemen are treated as ordinary employees,

\* Compiled from *Returns to the Royal Commission on Labor*, pp. 460, 465.

and receive wages even less than those paid by the municipality to carpenters, masons, bricklayers, and painters; that the mean wage paid to policemen in twelve towns which reported to the Royal Commission was about 4s. (92 cts.) less per week than the mean paid by five towns in the building trades. Policemen, of course, have steady employment throughout the year. This would more than compensate for the smaller daily wages. Booth says that the policeman's lot in London is about equal to that of the skilled workman. Yet the maximum daily wages of the metropolitan policeman are 13 per cent. less than the winter schedule and 23 per cent. less than the summer schedule required by the County Council to be paid to carpenters, bricklayers, and masons. The latter received 10*d.* per hour for fifty hours per week (41*s.* 8*d.* = \$10) in summer and forty-four to forty-seven hours in winter (36*s.* 8*d.* to 39*s.* 2*d.* = \$8.80 to \$9.40). Policemen in metropolitan London begin on 24*s.* (\$5.76) per week, and at the end of eight years receive 32*s.* (\$7.68) per week. There are also certain "additions" not enjoyed by the skilled laborer, such as uniforms, shoes, coal, and a superannuation fund of two-thirds pay at the end of twenty-six years of faithful service. These bring his condition fully up to that of the artisan. Special policemen get higher pay, and policemen in the "city" receive 36*s.* 6*d.* (\$8.76).

The policeman's pay has shared in the fair wages movement. In 1890 the maximum was 30*s.* (\$7.20) instead of the present 32*s.* (\$7.68), and 31*s.* 6*d.* (\$7.56) in the "city" instead of 36*s.* 6*d.* (\$8.76). Compared with American cities, where the policemen receive annual salaries 30 to 100 per cent. higher than the skilled workman could receive at his present daily rate, were he to work every day in the year, these figures are significant of the workingman's small influence in English municipal government.

Having inaugurated direct employment under conservative business auspices, the English cities find themselves ripe for the new labor movement of the past ten years. Henceforth "fair wages" and "centralization of business" go hand in hand. This is shown partly in the practice now followed throughout the kingdom in all forms of contract, of inserting a clause providing for the payment by contractors of the



standard rates of wages in the district where the work is carried out.\*

It is also shown more effectively in Table III., compiled from the reports of the Royal Commission on Labor, giving the average wage of men employed on roads, pavements, and sewers in 1886 and 1891. The rates in 1891 are in every case higher than those in 1886; and from the summary of the table it appears that in these five years the increases average 9.8

TABLE III.

SHOWING THE MEANS OF RETURNS RECEIVED OF WEEKLY WAGES PAID TO PERSONS EMPLOYED ON ROADS, SEWERS, AND PAVEMENTS BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN 1891-92 AND BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND PRIVATE COMPANIES TOGETHER IN 1886, GREAT BRITAIN. COMPILED FOR THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOR.

DISTRICT.	Weekly Wage.	
	1886.	1891-92.
1. London . . . . .	22s. 3d. (\$5.34)	26s. 5d. (\$6.34)
2. Northumberland, Durham, and Cumberland . . . . .	21 7 (\$5.18)	24 9 (\$5.94)
3. Outer London and neighborhood . . . . .	22 2 (\$5.32)	24 4 (\$5.84)
4. (a) Lancashire (towns over 50,000) . . . . .	22 1 (\$5.30)	23 6 (\$5.64)
(b) Lancashire (towns under 50,000), . . . . .	20 11 (\$5.03)	23 5 (\$5.62)
5. Yorkshire . . . . .	22 3 (\$5.34)	23 5 (\$5.62)
6. South Scotland . . . . .	20 4 (\$4.88)	22 8 (\$5.44)
7. Eastern and midland counties of England and North Wales . . . . .	21 5 (\$5.14)	22 5 (\$5.38)
8. Southern counties of England, Wales, and Gloucestershire . . . . .	19 7 (\$4.70)	21 10 (\$5.24)
9. North Scotland . . . . .	18 0 (\$4.32)	19 5 (\$4.66)

SUMMARY OF RESULTS OF ABOVE TABLE.

	Wage.		Percent- age of Increase.
	1886.	1891-92.	
1. England and Wales . . . . .	21s. 6d. (\$5.36)	23s. 8d. (\$5.68)	10.0
2. Scotland . . . . .	19 2 (\$4.60)	21 0 (\$5.24)	9.5
3. Great Britain . . . . .	21 1 (\$5.26)	23 2 (\$5.56)	9.8

\* *Special Report on Works Department of the London County Council, 1899, p. vii.*

per cent. throughout Great Britain. In both years the average for London is highest; and here, too, the greatest increase has taken place. This is owing to the greater influence of the labor movement in London compared with provincial towns and districts.

The foregoing returns are for the parishes of London, and not for the County Council. The parishes and their vestries are the historic units of local government, the county and the council of London having been created by Act of Parliament in 1888. While the council, at that date, was placed on a

TABLE IV.

INCREASE OF WAGES PAID MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES OF LONDON PARISHES,  
1886 to 1895.\*

	Board of Trade Returns, 1886.	Battersea Returns, 1891.	Charles Booth Returns, 1895.
Sweepers . . .	1,268. Av. 19s. 2d. (\$4.60)	879. 16s. (\$3.84) to 27s. (\$6.48), of whom 516=59% earned less than 20s. (\$4.80)	1,171. 18s. (\$4.32) to 28s. 3d. (\$6.78), of whom 187=16% earned less than 20s. (\$4.80)
Sewer flushers .	25s. (\$6.00) to 30s. (\$7.20)		24s. (\$5.76) to 36s. (\$8.64), usually 30s. (\$7.20)
Paviors . . .	Time workers, av. 38s. 4d. (\$9.20) Piece workers, av. 34s. (\$8.16) Av. paviors, 36s. 5d. (\$8.74)		26s. (\$6.24) to 42s. (\$10.08)
Paviors' laborers	Av. 24s. 11d. (\$5 98)		21s. (\$5.04) to 29s. (\$6.96)
Road laborers .	Av. 24s. 3d. (\$5.82)		20s. (\$4.80) to 29s. (\$6.96), few under 25s. (\$6.00)

\*Compiled from data given by Booth, *Life and Labor*, vol. viii. pp. 28-38.

basis of democratic suffrage, and in its elections the labor element has achieved representation, the case was different with the thirty-seven parishes which governed the same area with the council. It was not until 1895 that Battersea and West Ham acquired a definite labor representation in their government. Other parishes, though not influenced in the elections, have been affected by the movement for "fair wages." This is shown in Table IV., which gives the average wages paid to parish employees in London from the year 1886, when the Board of Trade investigated their wages, to 1895, when the returns were made to Mr. Charles Booth. The main increase appears in the years following 1891. At that date 59 per cent. of the sweepers received less than 20s. (\$4.80) per week. In 1895 only 16 per cent. received less than 20s.

An investigation made by the Battersea Vestry in 1891 gave the wages of 3,635 men, out of a total of 4,466, employed directly by municipal authorities in London. Charles Booth increased the number reported to 3,914. On the opposite page is a table (Table V.) compiled by Booth,\* comparing the Battersea returns with his own.

The table shows in each case the number and per centum of laborers grouped according to the amount of weekly wages received: first, of all classes of municipal employees; second, of sweepers generally. Booth, in commenting upon this table, says:—

"The all-round improvement in four years shown by these figures is certainly remarkable. Whereas in 1891 there were 21 per cent. earning below 20s [\$4.80], there are now only 5 per cent., and those receiving between 20s. and 25s. [\$6.00] have decreased, roughly speaking, by one-half. On the other hand, the number earning from 25s. to 35s. [\$8.40] has increased more than threefold. Dealing with the sweepers separately, the increase is even more striking."

Seeing that he places the poverty line between 20s. and 25s., Booth rightly observes that there is yet "ample room for improvement." "Every vestry in London," he says,† "could probably get an adequate supply of men to do the work [sweeping] for the 18s. [\$4.32] which is only paid in two cases.

\* *Life and Labor*, vol. viii. p. 486.

† Page 30.

TABLE V.

RELATIVE WAGES OF MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES IN LONDON, 1891-95,  
ALL EMPLOYEES.

	Battersea Returns, 1891.	Booth's Returns, 1895.
Below 20s. (\$4.80) . . . . .	732, or 20%	189, or 5%
20s. (\$4.80) to 25s. (\$6.00) . . . . .	2,129, or 58½%	1,156, or 29½%
25s. (\$6.00) to 30s. (\$7.20) . . . . .	513, or 14½%	1,830, or 46½%
30s. (\$7.20) to 35s. (\$8.40) . . . . .	147, or 4%	508, or 13%
35s. (\$8.40) to 40s. (\$9.60) . . . . .	55, or 1½%	117, or 3%
40s. (\$9.60) to 45s. (\$10.80) . . . . .	22, or ½%	87, or 2½%
45s. (\$10.80) and upwards . . . . .	37, or 1%	27, or ½%
	3,635, or 100%	3,914, or 100%

## SWEEPERS SEPARATELY.

	Battersea Returns, 1891.	Booth's Returns, 1895.
Below 20s. (\$4.80) . . . . .	258, or 29½%	150, or 13%
20s. (\$4.80) to 25s. (\$6.00) . . . . .	584, or 66½%	424, or 36%
25s. (\$6.00) and upwards . . . . .	37, or 4%	597, or 51%
	879, or 100%	1,171, or 100%

Their refusal to do so apparently meets with the approval of the rate-payers, and shows how strong is the feeling in favor of paying something more than a bare subsistence wage. . . . Under the influence of public opinion few vestries have been able to resist the demand of their sweepers for a rise of wages."

These statistical tables apply to all the parishes of London, and they show the influence of the fair wage movement. They do not show the way in which this movement added to the demand for direct employment. Not all the parishes were affected equally by the increase in wages. In only three or four have the laborers as yet secured substantial representation in the governing bodies. In these we may note the new impulse towards direct employment. The parish of West

Ham, during the period from May, 1894, to September, 1896, engaged in road-making, paving, sewerage, building, and all classes of repairing. A works department was organized, with a works manager. An investigation in 1896, and reports made by the bureau accountant, borough engineer, and works manager, led to the discontinuance of direct employment on large works, though retained on small works.\* The election of 1898, however, resulted in a labor victory, with an extensive program of municipal dwellings to be erected by the council, municipal gas, water, tramways, electric lights, bakeries, baths, and free libraries.

The parish of Battersea has gone much further. Here the contractor on public works is now unknown. All the work of the parish is carried on by the vestry's own men, whether it is the making of the main sewer, the laying of wood pavement, the erection of a public building, or the construction of an embankment on the riverside. This policy was begun several years ago, but the labor representation since 1894 has given added impetus until the final step was completed in 1898, with the erection of a municipal workshop. In the possession of its own workshop, Battersea is in advance of other municipalities except the County Council itself. This shop was erected on the day-labor system.

The contrast which we have just noticed between American and British municipal wages is further emphasized when we notice the different dates at which the cities began to pay increased wages. The London School Board and the London County Council began in 1889,—certain London parishes a few years later. Many parishes and provincial towns have not yet begun. In the United States the increase was led by New York. Other cities followed. The smaller cities and country villages have, however, like the provincial towns of England, not yet adopted the policy.

Table VI. shows in statistical form the remarkable change which has taken place in public relative to private wages. In New York it appears that, prior to the Civil War, the wages in private employment were higher than public wages in five of the six occupations represented. Both public and

\* *Special Report*, Appendix, p. 82.

private wages rose materially during the currency inflation of the war, the public wages making the larger gain in four cases, and the private wages in two cases. Following the war, both classes of wages were reduced, but private wages were reduced to a greater degree than public wages. In 1870 occurs the first excessive disparity, owing to the reduction of hours in municipal employment to eight. Private employment remained at ten hours throughout, except for bricklayers, stone-cutters, and carpenters. These secured eight and nine hours respectively in 1872, 1886, 1888. It will be seen that, owing to these shorter hours, skilled laborers have succeeded in reducing the difference between the two rates of pay, while the unskilled laborers show a stationary difference.

In Philadelphia and Springfield the relations between public and private wages have not materially changed during the period for which figures are available. There has been an increase in each, but the public wages have been generally higher throughout the sixty years covered by the reports. In

TABLE VI.\*

WAGES PER HOUR IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE EMPLOYMENT, NEW YORK.

DATE.	CARPENTERS.					BRICKLAYERS.				
	City.	Contractors.		City higher than private per cent.	Private higher than city per cent.	City.	Contractors.		City higher than private per cent.	Private higher than city per cent.
		Public work.	Private work.				Public work.	Private work.		
January, 1858,	15	—	19.2	—	28.0	17.5	—	20.	—	14.3
January, 1860,	17.2	—	19.8	—	15.1	20	—	20.5	—	2.5
January, 1865,	30	—	29.3	2.4	—	32	—	28.7	11.5	
July, 1870 . .	50	—	34.6	44.5	—	53	—	48.3	9.7	
January, 1879,	31.2	—	25.0	24.8	—	37.5	—	28.7	30.7	
January, 1884,	37.5	—	32.7	14.7	—	37.5	—	44	—	17.3
January, 1891,	37.5	—	38.6	—	2.9	43.7	—	40.4	8.2	
January, 1896,	44.5	—	37.25	19.5	—	50	—	49.5	1	
"		41		8.5			49		2	

\* Figures for years prior to and including 1891 are computed from the report of the Senate Committee on wholesale wages and prices, which were compiled by the Depart-

DATE.	STONE-CUTTERS.					BLACKSMITHS.				
	City.	Contractors.		City higher than private per cent.	Private higher than city per cent.	City.	Contractors.		City higher than private per cent.	Private higher than city per cent.
		Public work.	Private work.				Public work.	Private work.		
January, 1858,	18.2*	—	20	—	9.3	16.6	—	18.2	—	9.6
January, 1860,	20	—	20.2	—	1	18.2	—	19.6	—	7.7
January, 1865,	32	—	32.7	—	2.1	32	—	31.3	2.6	
July, 1870 . .	53	—	42.3	25.3	—	43.7	—	32.9	32 8	
January, 1879,	37.5	—	28.5	31.6	—	34.3	—	33	3.9	
January, 1884,	37.5	—	34	10.3	—	37.5	—	28.8	30.2	
January, 1891,	43.7	—	44.4	—	1.6	37.5	—	29.8	25.8	
January, 1896,	50	43.75	—	14.3	—	38	—	28.5	33.3	
"							33.25		14.4	

DATE.	BLACKSMITHS' HELPERS.					LABORERS.				
	City.	Contractors.		City higher than private per cent.	Private higher than city per cent.	City.	Contractors.		City higher than private per cent.	Private higher than city per cent.
		Public work.	Private work.				Public work.	Private work.		
January, 1858,	10.	—	9.9	1.0	—	10	—	10.7	—	7
January, 1860,	12.5	—	10.9	14.7	—	10	—	10.5	—	5
January, 1865,	20	—	19.2	4.2	—	19	—	19.1	—	.5
July, 1870 . .	25	—	19	31.6	—	27.5	—	19.3	42.5	
January, 1879,	22.5	—	16.3	38	—	20	—	12.8	56.2	
January, 1884,	25	—	17.4	43.7	—	22	—	15.2	44.7	
January, 1891,	25	—	18.6	34.4	—	22	—	16.3	35	
January, 1896,	28.75	—	23.25	23.6	—	18.5	—	13	42.3	
"		25.5		12.8			12.75		45.1	

ment of Labor. Figures for 1896 are from *Bulletin* No. 7 of the Department of Labor, November, 1896. The hours per day in private employment are ten except for carpenters, bricklayers, and stone-cutters in New York, since 1888, who have worked eight and nine hours. Carpenters, Philadelphia, eight hours since 1887. In public employment the hours are as follows: New York, ten, prior to 1870; eight hours from 1870 to date. The years selected are those which mark the turning-points of highest and lowest levels of general prices and wages.

## PHILADELPHIA.

DATE.	ENGINEERS.					CARPENTERS.				
	City.	Contractors.		City higher than pri- vate per cent.	Pri- vate higher than city per cent.	City.	Contractors.		City higher than pri- vate per cent.	Pri- vate higher than city per cent.
		Pub- lic work.	Pri- vate work.				Public work.	Private work.		
January, 1855,	17	—	13	30.8	—	17.5	—	15	16.7	12.6
January, 1860,	17.7	—	20	—	13	20*	—	17.5	14.3	
January, 1865,	21.1	—	25	—	18.5	27.5*	—	23.9	15.1	
January, 1872,	21.5	—	23.7	—	10.2	30†	—	27.1	10.7	
January, 1879,	19.7	—	18.5	6.5	—	23.9‡	—	26.9	—	
January, 1884,	21.4	—	23.5	—	9.8	—	—	—	—	
January, 1887,	22.7	—	23	—	1.3	33.3	—	30.7	8.5	
January, 1891,	23	—	24.5	—	6.5	33.3	—	30.3	9.9	
January, 1896,	23.75	—	27.5	—	15.7	32.5	—	29.25	11.1	
"		25.5			7.3		29.5		10.2	

DATE.	LABORERS.					MACHINISTS.				
	City.	Contractors.		City higher than pri- vate per cent.	Pri- vate higher than city per cent.	City.	Contractors.		City higher than pri- vate per cent.	Pri- vate higher than city per cent.
		Pub- lic work.	Pri- vate work.				Public work.	Private work.		
January, 1855,	12.9	—	10	29	—	15§	—	15.9	—	6
January, 1860,	13.3	—	11.1	31.7	—	15	—	16.7	—	11.3
January, 1865,	17.5	—	15.4	13.6	—	26.2	—	25	4.8	
January, 1872,	18.2	—	13.1	39	—	27.9	—	25.1	11.2	
January, 1879,	15	—	11	36.4	—	23.9	—	21.2	12.7	
January, 1884,	17.5	—	12.6	38.9	—	29	—	24.5	18.4	
January, 1887,	18.9	—	11.8	60.2	—	29.6	—	23.7	24.9	
January, 1891,	19.3	—	12.8	50.8	—	29.3	—	26.1	12.3	
January, 1896,	18.75	—	14	33.9	—	32.5	—	23.25	35.5	
"		13		44.2			25.25		24.7	

\*July.

† July, 1873.

‡ January, 1882.

§ 1857.



## SPRINGFIELD, MASS.

MASON'S.				LABORERS.				FOREMEN OF LABORERS.			
Date.	City.	Pri- vate.	City higher than private per cent.	Date.	City.	Pri- vate.	City higher than private per cent.	City.	Pri- vate.	City higher than private per cent.	Private higher than city per cent.
July, 1857 . .	30	20	50	January, 1855,	8	8.7	—	12.5	—	—	29
July, 1859 . .	30	20	50	January, 1860,	10 2	10	—	12.5	—	—	
January, 1866 .	35	20.9	67.5	January, 1865,	12 2	12.5	—	26.2†	20†	31	
July, 1872 . .	45	40	12.5	July, 1872 . .	20	20	—	28.3	2.25	25.8	
July, 1880 . .	35	30	16.6	January, 1879,	10.1	12.5	—	15.5	20	—	
July, 1884 . .	40	29.9	33.7	January, 1884,	15	15	—	24	20	20	
January, 1891 .	40	28.5	40.3	January, 1891,	15.1	16.5	—	25.2	20	26	
January,* 1899,†	75	55	36.3	January, 1899,	18.8	13.5	—	34.4	2.75	25.9	
								to	to	to	
								46.9	40	17.3	

\* Wages for 1899 quoted by Superintendent of Streets.

† Masons on sewer construction.

‡ July, 1868.

Springfield, however, the "laborers," who constitute by far the largest proportion of municipal employees, have generally received higher wages in private employment. This has been changed very recently, as will be seen from the rates for 1899. It may be laid down as a rule that, the smaller the city and the larger the proportion of tax-payers, the lower are the wages in public employment relative to private wages, and more slowly do "fair wages" find a place. The explanation is already suggested. The movement towards high wages was not sentimental. There was no pretence of "ethics" or "fair wages." The laborers, as an organized body, did not agitate for it. It was simply practical politics. In New York it coincided with Tweed. In all cases it was the voluntary bid of the politicians for the labor vote.

Returning now to our comparison of American and British cities, we conclude that the "fair wages" movement in England produced a slight increase in municipal wages, and it produced a corresponding increase in the wages paid by contractors on municipal works: whereas in American cities "practical politics" produced an enormous increase in municipal wages with scarcely any increase in municipal contractors' wages.

While this conclusion continues true at the present time in the majority of cases, yet recently a new policy in America has begun to show itself. As early as 1891 the States of Idaho and Kansas prohibited contractors on public works from exacting more than eight hours per day. This was copied by the federal government in 1892, by Colorado in 1893, and by Utah in 1894. The year 1899, however, is a decisive year in this change. In that year five States established eight hours for public contractors; namely, California, Massachusetts, New York, Washington, and West Virginia. California had already, in 1897, established a minimum of \$2.00 on State and municipal contracts, so that, with the eight-hour law of 1899, that State takes the most advanced position of any State or country. New York's law of 1899, declared unconstitutional by the Court of Appeals two years later, in addition to providing eight hours, requires also that wages paid by contractors shall not be less than the prevailing rate for a legal day's work

in the same trade or calling in the locality where the work is to be used, erected, etc., when completed. This does not place the contractor on exactly the same level as the public authorities, since the city and the State usually pay higher than the prevailing rate.

This new tendency, if it becomes established, will have an important weight upon the arguments for and against public employment. If contractors on public works are required to pay the same wages and grant the same hours as the public authorities themselves, then plainly a large part of the existing differences between the cost of public and the cost of private construction and operation will be eliminated. Private construction of public works and private operation of public enterprises will suffer an increase in their bills for wages amounting to 10 to 40 per cent. Whether they will be able, when thus brought up to the wage level of public employment, to show an economic advantage over the latter, will be an interesting field for study.

JOHN R. COMMONS.

NEW YORK.